

# Winter Riding

IT SEEMS TO HAPPEN EVERY YEAR: I GET ACCUSTOMED to riding in nice weather and then, before I know it, winter is here. Somehow, I feel that I never get any decent riding in during the season, but when I take a moment to reflect, I realize

that there were plenty of memorable rides. It just feels like the winter season comes up faster each year — must be associated with that age thing.

Although it's a time of year that many opt to put their ride into storage and not deal with the effects of the cold, there are many of us (myself included) who try to ride year round. Those of us who live in the northern parallels or higher elevations have a bit more to worry about than the cold. I'm not saying that the chill factor is something to take lightly, hypothermia can easily increase our risks while riding. Chris Maida did a great article in a past *AIM* issue explaining what can happen if your body temperature drops. A quick recap: when your body temp goes down, it can, without a doubt, affect your mental processing, which can delay physical reactions and turn everything into a possible mess. Along with that, being cold is no joy. Take the proper steps to keep yourself warm while still being able to move freely. You may be bundled up with tons of layers, but if you wind up looking like the Michelin Man, you're not going to be able to move, and that can lead to problems as well. This is where heated gear and microfiber thermos can be a big plus.

Though most of us know to keep warm in frigid temperatures, we sometimes forget some things to consider, seeing it's been almost a year since we last rode during the freezing months. With cold temps, we need to check our tire pressure far more frequently than during the normal riding season. Also with tires, keep in mind it will take them longer travel time to warm up for better traction. We may also need to change the grade of our oils to deal with the temps as well. Heading out for a ride during these months can be enjoyable, and can certainly develop some interest-

ing conversations with people during your rest stops (besides the standard "You must be crazy"). One person you should really listen to this time of year is the weatherman. Granted, we might always feel he gets things wrong, but checking out the forecast for the day can really be a benefit.

When it comes to temperatures at or below the freezing mark, you really have to consider the infamous, invisible black ice, especially if there have been recent moisture conditions such as rain, snow, or warm enough temps a few days before that may have melted snow by the roadside. If you have ever rolled on black ice, either in a car or motorcycle, it was probably memorable, and not in a good way. The big problem with black ice is loss of stability. This is when two wheels don't ease the soul; they cause control issues that may have you hitting the roadway at a rapid speed — not easing at all. Another reason to check forecasts is to make sure you won't have to deal with possible rain, snow, or ice while on the road and away from home. Having to ride in snow is extremely challenging and nerve racking. I mentioned in a recent column that if you do need to attempt riding in snow, go through the fresh snow and stay out of the tracks of others because that snow is packed, which makes it more slippery.

So far, riding in the winter sure doesn't sound like fun; it seems there is more risk than it's worth. Well, for those who decide to huddle around the fireplace instead of huddling around your V-twin for heat, there are things you can do to keep your riding spirit

alive till riding season. There are plenty of venues that offer riding information, whether for entertainment or education. Books, videos, and magazines, such as *AIM* and *Motorcycle Bagger* — you thought there were others? — can keep you well-informed and amused. Personally, I find the biker movies of the late '60s or early '70s enjoyable. They don't require a lot of thought, and you can still listen to the rumble of Harleys; that's always a good thing.

So whether you're one to venture out in less-than-ideal riding conditions, or decide to wait it out for the warmer months, just keep in mind that spring will be here as quickly as winter came — I hope. Stay warm, and stay safe. **AIM**



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